

MONTANA UPDATE

Montana Department of Commerce

Volume 17 • Issue 5 • May 2006

Governor's Conference Wrap-Up

We Found What We Were Looking For In Great Falls

It seems most of the 467 folks attending the 2006 Montana Governor's Conference on Tourism & Recreation found what they were looking for in Great Falls. Comments received during and after the April 10-11 conference included: "great sessions," "every speaker has done an excellent job," "phew, I'm in information overload, but looking forward to going back through that presentation and digesting what it's telling us." Whether you attended the conference or not, you'll have access to all the presentations provided us electronically at <http://travelmontana.mt.gov/conference/speakers.asp>.

For attendees, an evaluation form has been sent via e-mail and mail. Travel Montana looks forward to hearing what you liked, what you feel we could have done better and—most useful—what you would like to see at the 2007 conference planned for Helena on April 2-3.

Thanks to everyone who joined us in Great Falls. It was a great time! Congratulations to our Great Falls hosts. You did a great job and we know we'll be back.

Tourism Award Winners

Four statewide tourism award winners were honored for their achievement by the Montana Tourism and Recreation Industry at the 2006 Montana Governor's Conference in Great Falls. The honorees included:

Jay Robson—Tourism Person of the Year
(shown in photo with Betsy Baumgart)

Fort Benton—Tourism Community of the Year

Lady Cameron Heritage Celebration & PBS Premiere—Tourism Event of the Year

The City of Red Lodge, Community of Cooke City, Friends of the Beartooth All-American Road and the Red Lodge Area Chamber of Commerce—Tourism Partnership of the Year.

Jay Robson of Dollar-Rent-A-Car was recognized as a tireless advocate on behalf of Montana's tourism industry. He currently serves on the Missoula Convention and Visitors Bureau Board, Glacier Country Board and Russell Country Board. He is a former member of the Tourism Advisory Council and devotes countless hours to volunteer service in his community.

Fort Benton, known as a small town with a large heritage, was honored for their commitment to the preservation and promotion of their historic downtown, their numerous partnership collaborations and their ability to serve the needs of both those within their community and those that visit.

The Lady Cameron Heritage Celebration and PBS Premiere which took place in Terry, MT was a celebration of the great works of frontier photographer Evelyn Cameron and a successful fundraiser for her namesake foundation raising over \$18,000.

The Tourism Partnership award was given to the communities and organizations surrounding the Beartooth Highway which, despite mudslides closing their main tourism attraction and thoroughfare, rallied their resources and salvaged their summer tourism season.



Congratulations to all of this year's award winners.

RoundUp Highlights

The Rocky Mountain International (RMI) RoundUp, held in Butte, MT from March 30-April 2 was a huge success. Thirty-two operators from the UK, Germany, France, Italy, The Netherlands, Belgium and the USA attended, and all had high praise for Butte and the RoundUp events.

The operators were treated to a fam tour of Butte on March 30. They rode the Copper King Express, visited the World Museum of Mining, and did a "drive-by viewing" of several other Butte attractions. A stop at the historic M&M and a visit to a couple of attractions on Butte's new "Old Butte Historical Adventures" were also included.

The operators met with over 80 tourism suppliers from Montana, Idaho, South Dakota and Wyoming for two days in a marketplace setting to learn about lodging, attractions, events and activities in the region. Dinners for the operators were held at Fairmont Hot Springs and the Acoma Restaurant and both were met with rave reviews.

Pam Gosink, Marketing and Overseas Program Manager remarked, "Butte really rolled out the red carpet for not only the tour operators, but for suppliers and staff as well. Their hospitality was amazing and all of their efforts were well received by all. Many operators now plan to include Butte in their itineraries directly as a result of their visit here. But other suppliers benefited as well; I talked to at least a couple of other

suppliers from around the state who had signed contracts at the table during their appointments." Montana had a great showing—45 MT suppliers attended the RoundUp. This was the largest RoundUp ever in terms of both regional supplier and tour operator attendance. As Chuck Box, President of RMI noted "Butte not only raised the bar, but raised it out of the stadium."

Film Office News

The Montana Film Office had a very successful showing at the annual Locations Trade Show in Santa Monica CA, April 7-9th. Film Office Manager Sten Iversen and Project Coordinator John Ansotegui spent three days marketing Montana to film industry professionals who attended the show seeking

information on the best places in the world to film. This year Montana garnered over double the inquiries from the previous year, thanks in part to Montana's new *Big Sky on the Big Screen* film production incentive. "Film production is big business," said Iversen, "and the competition is fierce. The only way to compete for film production dollars is by having a competitive production incentive package." Montana incentives were passed by the Montana Legislature last session with support from Governor Schweitzer. The Film Office is hoping the increase in inquiries from the trade show will translate to a production-filled summer. Montana's beauty, crew base, production services and incentive package make Montana an attractive place for filmmakers.



In Memory

Jim Wilton, Assistant Director and Economist for the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR) for the past four years, passed away unexpectedly on March 26, 2006. Jim was responsible for the tourism economic impact

model and visitation models, conducted the Community Tourism Assessment Process each fall and cooperated with each project the Institute conducted.

Norma Nickerson, Director of ITRR had these words to share, "Jim was the finest colleague I have ever had the opportunity to work with over the years. He was always upbeat, ready to listen and loved each and every moment of life. His contribution at ITRR was enormous. Jim never spoke poorly of anyone. His grin lit up his face and made us laugh daily. We will miss him professionally and personally for a very long time."

Jim leaves behind his wife of 13-1/2 years, Heidi and his 2-year old daughter, Amanda. In a tremendous outpouring of support during the Governor's Conference closing banquet, a spontaneous auction took place in which the tourism industry donated over \$8,400 towards a trust set up in Amanda's name. A great deal of gratitude goes out to those organizations and individuals that donated items for both the silent and live auctions as well as the evening's impromptu auctioneer, Bill Holt. Upon hearing about the benefit, Jim's wife Heidi said, "I am overwhelmed by the generosity and concern expressed by all of you in Montana's tourism industry. While my heart is heavy with sadness, your caring is beyond measure."



Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided to disabled persons on request.

Calendar of Events:

May

- 6-10 International Pow Wow—Orlando, FL
- 13-21 National Tourism Week
- 26-27 Beartooth Highway grand opening celebration—Cooke City and Red Lodge, MT and Cody, WY

June

- 4-6 Tourism Advisory Council Meeting, Hilton Garden Inn, Missoula, MT

For all of the latest Montana tourism industry information log on to:
travelmontana.mt.gov



Travel Montana • Montana Film Office
Montana Department of Commerce

301 S. Park
PO Box 200533
Helena, MT 59620-0533

STD PRSRT
U.S. Postage
PAID
Helena, MT
Permit No. 20